

SALVATION ALTOGETHER BY GRACE

NO. 703

**A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”
2 Timothy 1:9.*

IF we would influence thoughtful persons it must be by solid arguments. Shallow minds may be wrought upon by mere warmth of emotion and force of excitement, but the more valuable part of the community must be dealt with in quite another manner. When the apostle Paul was desirous to influence his son in the faith, Timothy, who was a diligent and earnest student and a man of gifts as well as of grace, he did not attempt to affect him by mere appeals to his feelings, but felt that the most effectual way to act upon him was to remind him of solid doctrinal truth which he knew him to have believed.

This is a lesson for the ministry at large. Certain earnest preachers are incessantly exciting the people, but seldom if ever instructing them, they carry much fire and very little light. God forbid that we should say a word against appealing to the feelings, this is most needful in its place, but then there is a due proportion to be observed in it. A religion which is based upon, sustained, and maintained simply by excitement, will necessarily be very flimsy and unsubstantial, and will yield very speedily to the crush of opposition or to the crumbling hand of time. The preacher may touch the feelings by rousing appeals, as the harpist touches the harp strings, he will be very foolish if he should neglect so ready and admirable an instrument, but still as he is dealing with reasonable creatures, he must not forget to enlighten the intellect and instruct the understanding.

And how can he appeal to the understanding better than by presenting to it the truth which the Holy Ghost teaches? Scriptural doctrine must furnish us with powerful motives to urge upon the minds of Christians. It seems to me that if we could by some unreasoning impulse move you to a certain course of action it might be well in its way, but it would be unsafe and untrustworthy, for you would be equally open to be moved in an opposite direction by other persons more skilled in such operations, but if God enables us by His Spirit to influence your minds by solid truth and substantial argument, you will then move with a constancy of power which nothing can turn aside.

The feather flies in the wind, but it has no inherent power to move, and consequently when the gale is over it falls to the ground—such is the religion of excitement, but the eagle has life within itself, and its wings bear it aloft and onward whether the breeze favors it or no—such is religion, when sustained by a conviction of the truth. The well-taught man in Christ Jesus stands firm where the uninstructed infant would fall or be carried away. “Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine,” says the apostle, and those are least likely to be so carried who are well established in the truth as it is in Jesus.

It is somewhat remarkable—at least it may seem so to persons who are not accustomed to think upon the subject—that the apostle, in order to excite Timothy to boldness, to keep him constant in the faith, reminds him of the great doctrine that the grace of God reigns in the salvation of men. He gives in this verse—this parenthetical verse as some call it, but which seems to me to be fully in the current of the passage—he gives in this verse a brief summary of the Gospel, showing the great prominence which it gives to the grace of God, with the design of maintaining Timothy in the boldness of his testimony for Christ. I do not doubt but that a far greater power for usefulness lies concealed within the doctrines of grace than some men have ever dreamed of. It has been usual to look upon doctrinal truth as being nothing more than unpractical theory, and many have spoken of the precepts of God’s Word as being

more practical and more useful, the day may yet come when in clearer light we shall perceive that sound doctrine is the very root and vital energy of practical holiness, and that to teach the people the truth which God has revealed is the readiest and surest way of leading them to obedience and persevering holiness.

May the Holy Spirit assist us while we shall, first, *consider the doctrine taught by the apostle in this text*, and secondly, *the uses of that doctrine*.

I. Very carefully let us CONSIDER THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY THE APOSTLE IN THIS TEXT.

Friends will remember that it is not our objective to preach the doctrine which is most popular or most palatable, nor do we desire to set forth the views of any one person in the assembly; our one aim is to give what we judge to be the meaning of the text. We shall probably deliver doctrine which many of you will not like, and if you should not like it we shall not be at all surprised, or even if you should be vexed and angry we shall not be at all alarmed, because we never understood that we were commissioned to preach what would please our hearers, nor were expected by sensible, not to say gracious men, to shape our views to suit the notions of our audience. We count ourselves amenable to God and to the text, and if we give the meaning of the text, we believe we shall give the mind of God, and we shall be likely to have His favor, which will be sufficient for us, contradict us who may. However, let every candid mind be willing to receive the truth, if it be clearly in the inspired Word.

1. The apostle in stating his doctrine in the following words, “Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” *declares God to be the author of salvation*—“Who has saved us and called us.” The whole tenor of the verse is towards a strong affirmation of Jonah’s doctrine, “that salvation is of the Lord.” It would require very great twisting, involving more than ingenuity, it would need dishonesty, to make out salvation by man out of this text, but to find salvation altogether of God in it is to perceive the truth which lies upon the very surface.

No need for profound inquiry, the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein, for the text says as plainly as words can say, “God has saved us, and called us with an holy calling.” The apostle, then, in order to bring forth the truth that salvation is of grace, declares that it is of God, that it springs directly and entirely from Him and from Him only. Is not this according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in other places, where He affirms over and over again that the alpha and omega of our salvation must be found, not in ourselves but in our God?

Our apostle in saying that God has saved us refers to all the persons of the Divine Unity. *The Father* has saved us. “God has given to us eternal life” 1 John 5:2. “The Father himself loves you.” It was He whose gracious mind first conceived the thought of redeeming His chosen from the ruin of the fall, it was His mind which first planned the way of salvation by substitution, it was from His generous heart that the thought first sprang that Christ should suffer as the covenant head of His people, as says the apostle, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved” Eph 1:3-6.

From the heart of divine compassion came the gift of the only begotten Son, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The Father selected the persons who should receive an interest in the redemption of His Son, for these are described as, “called according to his purpose” Rom 8:28. The plan of salvation in all its details sprang from the Father’s wisdom and grace.

The apostle did not, however, overlook the work of *the Son*. It is most certainly through the Son of God that we are saved, for is not His name Jesus, the Savior? Incarnate in the flesh, His holy life is the righteousness in which saints are arrayed, while His ignominious and painful death has filled the sacred

bath of blood in which the sinner must be washed that he may be made clean. It is through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus that the people of God become accepted in the Beloved. With one consent before the eternal throne they sing, “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory,” and they chant that hymn because He deserves the glory which they ascribe to him. It is the Son of God who is the Savior of men, and men are not the saviors of themselves.

Nor did the apostle, I am persuaded, forget that Third Person in the blessed Unity—the *Holy Spirit*. Who but the Holy Spirit first gives us power to understand the Gospel? “The carnal mind understands not the things that be of God.” Does not the Holy Spirit influence our will, turning us from the obstinacy of our former rebellion to the obedience of the truth? Does not the Holy Ghost renew us, creating us in Christ Jesus unto good works? Is it not by the Holy Spirit’s breath that we live in the spiritual life? Is He not to us instructor, comforter, quickener, is He not everything, in fact, through His active operations upon our mind? The Father, then, in planning, the Son in redeeming, the Spirit, in applying the redemption must be spoken of as the one God “who has saved us.”

Brethren, to say that we save ourselves is to utter a manifest absurdity. We are called in Scripture “a temple”—a holy temple in the Lord. But shall anyone assert that the stones of the edifice were their own architect? Shall it be said that the stones of the building in which we are now assembled cut themselves into their present shape, and then spontaneously came together, and piled this spacious edifice? Should anyone assert such a foolish thing, we would be disposed to doubt his sanity, much more may we suspect the spiritual sanity of any man who should venture to affirm that the great temple of the church of God designed and erected itself. No, we believe that God the Father was the architect, sketched the plan, supplies the materials, and will complete the work.

Shall it also be said that those who are redeemed redeemed themselves? that slaves of Satan break their own fetters? Then why was a redeemer needed at all? How should there be any need for Jesus to descend into the world to redeem those who could redeem themselves? Do you believe that the sheep of God, whom He has taken from between the jaws of the lion, could have rescued themselves? It were a strange thing if such were the case. Our Lord Jesus came not to do a work of supererogation, but if He came to save persons who might have saved themselves, He certainly came without a necessity for so doing. We cannot believe that Christ came to do what the sinners might have done themselves. No. “He has trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him,” and the redemption of His people shall give glory unto Himself only.

Shall it be asserted that those who were once dead have spiritually quickened themselves? Can the dead make themselves alive? Who shall assert that Lazarus, rotting in the grave, came forth to life of himself? If it be so said and so believed, then, nay, not even then, will we believe that the dead in sin have ever quickened themselves. Those who are saved by God the Holy Spirit are created anew according to Scripture, but whoever dreamed of creation creating itself? God spoke the world out of nothing, but nothing did not aid in the creation of the universe. Divine energy can do everything, but what can nothing do?

Now if we have a new creation, there must have been a creator, and it is clear that not being then spiritually created, we could not have assisted in our own new creation, unless, indeed, death can assist life, and non-existence aid in creation. The carnal mind does not assist the Spirit of God in new creating a man, but altogether regeneration is the work of God the Holy Ghost, and the work of renewal is from His unassisted power. Father, Son, and Spirit we then adore, and putting these thoughts together, we would humbly prostrate ourselves at the foot of the throne of the august Majesty, and acknowledge that if saved He alone has saved us, and unto Him be the glory.

2. We next remark that grace is in this verse rendered conspicuous when we see that *God pursues a singular method*, “Who has saved us and called us.” The peculiarity of the manner lies in three things—first, in the *completeness* of it. The apostle uses the perfect tense and says, “who *has* saved us.” Believers in Christ Jesus *are* saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state and may ultimately be saved, but they *are* already saved. This is not according to the common talk of

professors nowadays, for many of them speak of being saved when they come to die, but it is according to the usage of Scripture to speak of us who *are* saved. Be it known this morning that every man and woman here is either saved at this present moment or lost, and that salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed and to be sung of in a future state above, but a matter to be obtained, received, promised and enjoyed now. God has saved His saints, mark, not partly saved them, but perfectly saved them.

The Christian is perfectly saved in *God's purpose*, God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete. He is saved, also, as *to the price which has been paid for him*, for this is done not in part but in whole. The substitutionary work which Christ has offered is not a certain proportion of the work to be done, but "it is finished" was the cry of the Savior ere He died. The believer is also perfectly saved *in his covenant Head*, for as we were utterly lost as soon as ever Adam fell, before we had committed any actual sin, so every man in Christ was saved in the second Adam when He finished His work. The Savior completed His work, and in the sense in which Paul uses that expression, "He has saved us."

This completeness is one peculiarity—we must mark another. I want you to notice the *order* as well as the completeness, "who has saved us and called us." What! saved us before He called us? Yes, so the text says. But is a man saved before he is called by grace? Not in his own experience, not as far as the work of the Holy Spirit goes, but he is saved in God's purpose, in Christ's redemption, and in his relationship to his covenant Head, and he is saved, moreover, in this respect, that the work of his salvation is done, and he has only to receive it as a finished work. In the olden times of imprisonment for debt, it would have been quite correct for you to step into the cell of a debtor and say to him, "I have freed you," if you had paid his debts and obtained an order for his discharge. Well, but he is still in prison. Yes, but you really liberated him as soon as you paid his debts. It is true he was still in prison, but he was not legally there, and no sooner did he know that the debt was paid, and that receipt was pleaded before proper authorities, than the man obtained his liberty.

So the Lord Jesus Christ paid the debts of His people before they knew anything about it. Did He not pay them on the cross more than eighteen hundred years ago to the utmost penny? and is not this the reason why, as soon as He meets with us in a way of grace, He cries, "I have saved you, lay hold on eternal life"? We are, then, virtually, though not actually, saved before we are called. "He has saved us and called us."

There is yet a third peculiarity, and that is in connection with the calling. God has called us with a *holy calling*. Those whom the Savior saved upon the tree are in due time effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness, they leave their sins, they endeavor to be like Christ, they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion, but from the stress of a new nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness, just as naturally as aforetime they delighted in sin. Whereas their old nature loved everything that was evil, their new nature cannot sin because it is born of God, and it loves everything that is good. Does not the apostle mention this result of our calling in order to meet those who say that God calls His people because He foresees their holiness? Not so, He calls them to that holiness, that holiness is not a cause but an effect, it is not the motive of His purpose, but the result of His purpose. He neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them.

The excellences which we see in a believer are as much the work of God as the atonement itself. This second point brings out very sweetly the fullness of the grace of God. First, salvation must be of grace, because the Lord is the author of it, and what motive but grace could move Him to save the guilty? In the next place, salvation must be of grace because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Salvation is completed by God, and therefore not of man, neither by man, salvation is wrought by God in an order which puts our holiness as a consequence and not as a cause, and therefore merit is forever disowned.

3. When a speaker desires to strengthen his point and to make himself clear, he generally puts in a negative as to the other side. So the apostle adds a negative—“Not according to our works.” The world’s great preaching is, “Do as well as you can, live a moral life, and God will save you.” The Gospel preaching is this—“You are a lost sinner, and you can deserve nothing of God but His displeasure, if you are to be saved, it must be by an act of sovereign grace. God must freely extend the silver scepter of His love to you, for you are a guilty wretch who deserves to be sent to the lowest hell. Your best works are so full of sin that they can in no degree save you, to the free mercy of God you must owe all things.” “Oh,” says one, “are good works of no use?” God’s works are of use when a man is saved, they are the evidences of his being saved, but good works do not save a man, good works do not influence the mind of God to save a man, for if so, salvation would be a matter of debt and not of grace. The Lord has declared over and over in His Word, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” “By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified.”

The apostle in the epistle to the Galatians is very strong indeed upon this point, indeed he thunders it out again, and again, and again. He denies that salvation is even so much as in part due to our works, for if it be by work then he declares it is not of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace, and if it be of grace it is not of works, otherwise work is no more work. Paul assures us that the two principles of grace and merit can no more mix together than fire and water, that if man is to be saved by the mercy of God, it must be by the mercy of God and not by works, but if man is to be saved by works, it must be by works entirely and not by mercy mixed therewith, for mercy and work will not go together. Jesus saves, but He does all the work or none. He is Author and Finisher, and works must not rob Him of His due.

Sinner, you must either receive salvation freely from the hand of Divine Bounty, or else you must earn it by your own unassisted merits, which last is utterly impossible. Oh that you would yield to the first! My brethren, this is the truth which still needs to be preached. This is the truth which shook all Europe from end to end when Luther first proclaimed it. Is not this the old thunderbolt which the great reformer hurled at Rome—“Justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”? But why did God make salvation to be by faith? Scripture tells us—“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” If it had been by works it must have been by debt, but since it is by faith, we can clearly see that there can be no merit in faith. It must be therefore by grace.

4. My text is even more explicit yet, *for the eternal purpose is mentioned*. The next thing the apostle says is this: “Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose.” Mark that word—“according to his own purpose.” Oh how some people wriggle over that word, as if they were worms on a fisherman’s hook! but there it stands, and cannot be got rid of. God saves His people “according to his *purpose*,” nay, “according to his *own purpose*.”

My brethren and sisters, do you not see how all the merit and the power of the creature are shut out here, when you are saved, not according to *your* purpose or merit, but “according to *his* own purpose”? I shall not dwell on this, it is not exactly the objective of this morning’s discourse to bring out in full the great mystery of electing love, but I will not for a moment keep back the truth. If any man be saved, it is not because he purposed to be saved, but because God purposed to save him. Have you never read the Holy Spirit’s testimony, “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy”?

The Savior said to His apostles what He in effect says also to us, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you might bring forth fruit.” Some hold one and some another view concerning the freedom of the will, but our Savior’s doctrine is, “You will *not* come unto me that you might have life.” You will not come, your wills will never bring you, if you do come, it is because grace inclined you. “No man can come unto me, except the Father which has sent me draw Him.” “Whosoever comes to me I will in no wise cast out,” is a great and precious general text, but it is quite consistent with the rest of the same verse—“All that the Father gives me shall come to me.”

Our text tells us that our salvation is “according to his own purpose.” It is a strange thing that men should be so angry against the purpose of God. We ourselves have a purpose, we permit our fellow creatures to have some will of their own, and especially in giving away their own goods, but is my God

to be bound and fettered by men, and not permitted to do as He wills with His own. But be this known unto you, O men who reply against God, that He gives no account of His actions, but asks of you, “Can I not do as I will with My own?” He rules in heaven, and in the armies of this lower world, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What do you?”

5. But then the text, lest we should make any mistake, adds, “according to his own purpose and grace.” *The purpose is not founded on foreseen merit, but upon grace alone.* It is grace, all grace, nothing but grace from first to last. Man stands shivering outside, a condemned criminal, and God sitting upon His throne, sends the herald to tell him that He is willing to receive sinners and to pardon them. The sinner replies, “Well, I am willing to be pardoned if I am permitted to do something in order to earn pardon. If I can stand before the King and claim that I have done something to win His favor, I am quite willing to come.” But the herald replies, “No, if you are pardoned, you must understand it is entirely and wholly as an act of grace on God’s part. He sees nothing good in you, He knows that there is nothing good in you, He is willing to take you just as you are, black, and bad, and wicked, and undeserving, He is willing to give you graciously what He would not sell to you, and what He knows you cannot earn of Him. Will you have it?” and naturally every man says, “No, I will not be saved in that style.” Well, then, soul, remember that you will never be saved at all, for God’s way is salvation by grace.

You will have to confess, if ever you are saved, my dear hearer, that you never deserved one single blessing from the God of grace, you will have to give all the glory to His holy name if ever you get to heaven. And mark you, even in the matter of the acceptance of this offered mercy, you will never accept it unless He makes you willing. He does freely present it to every one of you, and He honestly bids you come to Christ and live, but come you never will, I know, except the effectual grace which first provided mercy shall make you willing to accept that mercy. So the text tells us it is His own purpose and grace.

6. Again, in order to shut out everything like boasting, *the whole is spoken of as a gift.* Do notice that, lest (for we are such straying sheep in this matter)—lest we should still slip out of the field, it is added, “purpose and grace which he *gave* us”—not “which He sold us,” “offered us,” but “which he gave us.” He must have a word here which shall be a death-blow to all merit—“which he gave us”—it was given, and what can be freer than a gift, and what more evidently of grace?

7. *But the gift is bestowed through a medium which glorifies Christ.* It is written, “which was given us *in Christ Jesus.*” We ask to have mercy from the well-head of grace, but we ask not even to make the bucket in which it is to be brought to us, Christ is to be the sacred vessel in which the grace of God is to be presented to our thirsty lips. Now where is boasting? Why surely there it sits at the foot of the cross and sings, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Is it not grace and grace alone?

8. Yet further, a period is mentioned and added—“*before the world began.*” Those last words seem to me forever to lay prostrate all idea of anything of our own merits in saving ourselves, because it is here witnessed that God gave us grace “before the world began.” Where were you then? What hand had you in it “before the world began”? Why, fly back if you can in imagination to the ancient years when those venerable mountains, that elder birth of nature, were not yet formed, when world, and sun, and moon, and stars, were all in embryo in God’s great mind, when the un navigated sea of space had never been disturbed by wing of seraph, and the awful silence of eternity had never been startled by the song of cherubim—when God dwelt alone. If you can conceive that time before all time, that vast eternity—it was then He gave us grace in Christ Jesus. What, O soul, had you to do with that? Where were your merits then? Where were you yourself? O you small dust of the balance, you insect of a day, where were you? See how JEHOVAH reigned, dispensing mercy as He would, and ordaining unto eternal life without taking counsel of man or angel, for neither man or angel then had an existence. That it might be all of grace He gave us grace before the world began.

I have honestly read out the doctrine of the text, and nothing more. If such is not the meaning of the text I do not know the meaning of it, and I cannot therefore tell you what it is, but I believe that I have given the natural and grammatical teaching of the text. If you do not like the doctrine why I cannot help

it. I did not make the text, and if I have to expound it I must expound it honestly as it is in my Master's Word, and I pray you to receive what He says whatever you may do with what I say.

II. I shall want your patience while I try to SHOW THE USES OF THIS DOCTRINE.

The doctrine of grace has been put by in the lumber chamber. It is acknowledged to be true, for it is confessed in most creeds, it is in the Church of England articles, it is in the confessions of all sorts of Protestant Christians, except those who are avowedly Arminian, but how little is it ever preached! It is put among the relics of the past. It is considered to be a respectable sort of retired officer, who is not expected to see any more active service.

Now I believe that it is not a superannuated officer in the Master's army, but that it is as full of force and vigor as ever. But what is the use of it? Why, first then, it is clear from the connection that it has a tendency to embolden the man who receives it. Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed, and he gives this as a motive—How can a man be ashamed when he believes that God has given him grace in Christ Jesus before the world was? Suppose the man to be very poor. "Oh," says he, "what does it matter? Though I have but a little oil in the cruse, and a little meal in the barrel, yet I have a lot and a portion in everlasting things. My name is not in Doomsday Book nor in Burke's Peerage, but it is in the book of God's election, and was there before the world began."

Such a man dares look the proudest of his fellows in the face. This was the doctrine on which the brave old Ironsides fed, the men who, when they rode to battle with the war cry of "The Lord of hosts!" made the cavaliers fly before them like chaff before the wind. No doctrine like it for putting a backbone into a man, and making him feel that he is made for something better than to be trodden down like straw for the dunghill beneath a despot's heel. Sneer who will, the elect of God derive a nobility from the divine choice which no royal patent can outshine.

I would that free grace was more preached, because *it gives men something to believe with confidence*. The great mass of professing Christians know nothing of doctrine, their religion consists in going a certain number of times to a place of worship, but they have no care for truth one way or another. I speak without any prejudice in this matter, but I have talked with a large number of persons in the course of my very extensive pastorate, who have been for years members of other churches, and when I have asked them a few questions upon doctrinal matters it did not seem to me that they thought they were in error, they were perfectly willing to believe almost anything that any earnest man might teach them, but they did not know anything, they had no minds of their own, and no definite opinions.

Our children, who have learned "The Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith," know more about the doctrines of grace and the doctrine of the Bible than hundreds of grown-up people who attend a ministry which very eloquently teaches nothing. It was observed by a very excellent critic not long ago that if you were to hear thirteen lectures on astronomy or geology, you might get a pretty good idea of what the science was, and the theory of the person who gave the lectures, but that if you were to hear thirteen hundred sermons from some ministers, you would not know at all what they were preaching about or what their doctrinal sentiments were. It ought not to be so. Is not this the reason why Puseyism spreads so, and all sorts of errors have such a foothold, because our people as a whole do not know what they believe? The doctrines of the Gospel, if well received, give to a man something which he knows and which he holds and which will become dear to him, for which he would be prepared to die if the fires of persecution were again kindled.

Better still is it that this doctrine not only gives the man something to hold but *it holds the man*. Let a man once have burnt into him that salvation is of God and not of man, and that God's grace is to be glorified and not human merit, and you will never get that belief out of him, it is the rarest thing in all the world to hear of such a man ever apostatizing from his faith. Other doctrine is slippery ground, like the slope of a mountain composed of loose earth and rolling stones, down which the traveler may slide long before he can even get a transient foothold, but this is like a granite step upon the eternal pyramid of truth, get your feet on this, and there is no fear of slipping so far as doctrinal standing is concerned. If we would have our churches in England well instructed and holding fast the truth, we must bring out the

grand old verity of the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus before the world began. Oh may the Holy Spirit write it on our hearts!

Moreover, my brethren, this doctrine overwhelms as with an avalanche all the claims of priestcraft. Let it be told to men that they are saved by God, and they say at once, "Then what is the good of the priest?" If they are told it is God's grace then they ask, "Then you do not want our money to buy masses and absolutions," and down goes the priest at once.

Beloved, this is the battering ram that God uses with which to shake the gates of hell. How much more forcible than the pretty essays of many divines, which have no more power than bulrushes, no more light than smoking flax. What do you suppose people used to meet in the woods for in persecuting times, meet by thousands outside the town of Antwerp, and such-like places on the Continent, in jeopardy of their lives? Do you suppose they would ever have come together to hear that poor milk-and-water theology of this age, or to receive the lukewarm milk and water of our modern anti-Calvinists?

Not they, my brethren. They needed stronger meat, and more savory diet to attract them. Do you imagine that when it was death to listen to the preacher, that men under the shadows of night, and amid the wings of tempest would then listen to philosophical essays, or to mere moral precepts, or to diluted, adulterated, soul-less, theological suppositions? No, there is no energy in that kind of thing to draw men together under fear of their lives.

So what did bring them together in the dead of night amidst the glare of lightning, and the roll of thunder—what brought them together? Why, the doctrine of the grace of God, the doctrine of Jesus, and of His servants Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, for there is something in that doctrine which touches the heart of the Christian, and gives him food such as his soul loves, savory meat, suitable to his heaven-born appetite. To hear this men braved death, and defied the sword. And if we are to see once again the scarlet hat plucked from the wearer's head, and the shaven crowns with all the gaudy trumpery of Rome sent back to the place from whence they came—and heaven grant that they may take our Puseyite Established Church with them—it must be by declaring all the doctrines of the grace of God. When these are declared and vindicated in every place, we shall yet again make these enemies of God and man to know that they cannot stand their ground for a moment, where men of God wield the sword of the Lord and of Gideon by preaching the doctrines of the grace of God.

Brethren, let the man receive these truths, let them be written in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and they will make him *look up*. He will say, "God has saved me!" and he will walk with a constant eye to God. He will not forget to see the hand of God in nature and in providence, he will, on the contrary, discern the Lord working in all places, and will humbly adore Him. He will not give to laws of nature or schemes of state the glory due to the Most High, but will have respect unto the unseen Ruler. "What the Lord says to me that will I do," is the believer's language. "What is His will that will I follow; what is His Word, that will I believe; what is His promise, on that I will live." It is a blessed habit to teach a man to look up, look up to God in all things.

At the same time, this doctrine makes a man look down upon himself. "Ah," he says, "I am nothing, there is nothing in me to merit esteem. I have no goodness of my own. If saved, I cannot praise myself, I cannot in any way ascribe to myself honor, God has done it, God has done it." Nothing makes the man so humble, but nothing makes him so glad, nothing lays him so low at the mercy seat, but nothing makes him so brave to look his fellow man in the face. It is a grand truth, would to God you all knew its mighty power!

Lastly, this precious truth is full of comfort to the sinner, and that is why I love it. As it has been preached by some it has been exaggerated and made into a bugaboo. Why, there are some who preach the doctrine of election as though it were a line of sharp spikes to keep a sinner from coming to Christ, as though it were a sharp, glittering halbert to be pushed into the breast of a coming sinner to keep him from mercy. Now it is not so. Sinner, whoever you may be, wherever you may be, your greatest comfort should be to know that salvation is by grace. Why man, if it were by merit, what would become of you? Suppose that God saved men on account of their merits, where would you drunkards be? where would

you swearers be? you who have been unclean and unchaste, and you whose hearts have cursed God, and who even now do not love Him, where would you be?

But when it is all of grace, why then all your past life, however black and filthy it may be, need not keep you from coming to Jesus. Christ receives sinners, God has elected sinners, He has elected some of the blackest of sinners—why not you? He receives every one that comes to Him. He will not cast you out. There have been some who have hated Him, insulted Him to His face, that have burned His servants alive, and have persecuted Him in His members, but as soon as they have cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” He has given them mercy at once, and He will give it to you if you are led to seek it.

If I had to tell you that you were to work out your own salvation apart from His grace it were a sad look-out for you, but when it comes to you thus, black, there is washing for you! dead! there is life for you! naked! there is raiment for you! All undone and ruined! here is a complete salvation for you! O soul, may you have grace to lay hold of it, and then you and I together will sing to the praise of the glory of divine grace.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Timothy 1.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.